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ABSTRACT

The communicative approach is the most appropriate for teaching foreign languages to mixed-ability classes, because traditional grammar-translation, audiolingual, and audiovisual approaches to language instruction focusing largely on correctness of form and language use have appeal for only the most able learners and require abstraction of the structure and patterns of the target language from unauthentic or unauthentically used language data. Structure-based models do not accommodate different learning styles, aptitudes, attitudes, social background, and interests, they cause the less gifted students to lose interest quickly, and they do not encourage students to develop social and study skills while learning the language as the communicative model does. If the methodology is truly communicative, students will learn to listen to each other, cooperate, and learn from one another. A communicative model organized by themes, for purposes of motivation and redundancy, that provides initial input, receptive tasks, additional input, reproductive language tasks, further input, and productive language tasks is progressive in its skill development, leading ultimately to free use of communicative skills. Several exercises are available for use at each stage of this model, accommodating mixed abilities. A number of illustrative activities are included in the article. (MSE)

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MIXED-ABILITY FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING & THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH. THE PUPIL'S CASE.

Gerard M. Willems

Introduction

The purpose of this contribution to the present collection of articles on the Communicative Approach and its implications for the training of language teachers is to argue that in attempting to teach Foreign Languages (FL) to mixed-ability classes, the teacher's best approach is the communicative approach. In what follows attention will be paid first to what is to be understood by the communicative approach (I), second to what a mixid-ability class is taken to be (II) and third to how this communicative approach is preferable to other approaches in teaching mixed-ability children to master a language (III). Finally something will be said about the guiding principles for the communicative model for mixed-ability teaching that is offered. These principles

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concern the design of the syllabus and the organisation of classroom-work i.e. the methodology. By way of illustration of this organisation some exercises will be shown and concisely described (IV).

I The Communicative Approach

The term "Communicative Approach" although used widely nowadays, is hard to define. One is tempted to try a negative definition first offsetting it against structurally oriented audio/visual and situational approaches. Teaching languages communicatively then is not concentrating exclusively on language as form, on grammatical structures, lexicon, morphology, segmental pronunciation and spelling. It is not judging the learners on their command of all these elements without bothering about what they can do with them in communicating with other human beings. In the Communicative Approach the mastery of the necessary structures and lexis etc. is only seen as a step towards the realisation of what everybody sees as the ultimate objective of all foreign language study: the development of communicative ability in the learner. The learner cannot even hope to progress in his ability "to function in a foreign language situation" (1) if he satisfies himself with learning about the language without actually trying to make it work for himself. On the part of the teacher it means that he should not allow himself to fob his learners off by offering them only the linguistic data of a language without organising realistic and stimulating activities in which they can try their hand at using these data for communication, thus making the language something of themselves. For the teacher this has grave implications on a number of scores. To begin with he will have to revise his basic attitude towards the teaching of language. He will have to learn to see language for what it is: a means of communication in the first place and not a body of knowledge. Without becoming completely permissive he will thus have to change his attitude towards errors. They should only be paid attention to during those phases of the lesson when linguistic input is discussed and practised. Errors should help him and his learners to see

where there are still gaps in the learner's ideas of how the language works. Their correction should not play a part any more in the most important (and perhaps for many teachers new) phase of the FL lesson: the phase when the learner is allowed to "play" and experiment with the language[2]. During this phase the learner should be given ample chance through the organisation of stimulating activities that involve his personality to try his hand at using the FL for real communication i.e. mobilising "the negotiative process between prior knowledge & experience and new knowledge & experience"[3] that language learning consists of. Only in this way can we hope to offer some scope to this highly personal and individual process that language learning is. On the part of the teacher this requires the insight that language simply cannot be taught in the same way as history or social science, that it is only the learner's activity in trying to use the FL for negotiating meaning that, in the long run, can result in the development of a satisfactory communicative performance. If the point seems laboured a bit it is because sometimes teachers use a methodology that makes use of classroom-activities that, at face value, bear a close resemblance to activities employed in a communicative approach. Closer inspection, though, brings to light that the activities cannot be labelled "communicative" at all because they do not allow the learner sufficient freedom and are, to all intents and purposes, geared more towards developing linguistic-competence (the internalising of grammatical rules) than towards developing communicative performance.

The emphasis in the teacher's role thus shifts from his being the "knower-about the language" to his being the "user-of-the-language" and the creative organiser of effective classroom activities. This brings us to the second implication that the communicative approach holds for the language teacher. He will have to be able to effectively organise classroom activities. He will have to guide small groups of learners and individuals in their acquisition processes. They will need his help in making choices in the material they need for this. The teacher will, more than in traditional "frontal" teaching situations, have to be able to create the right atmosphere for language

acquisition processes to take place. In other words a great deal more is needed in a teacher than the the ability to empty a bag of methodological tricks in the classroom[4].

A further implication is, of course, that the teacher needs a basic insight in how communication works in the FL, if possible in contrast with his L1. This is the field of study covered by Pragmalinguistics[5], and Discourse Analysis, both disciplines that are related to the wider field of study called Sociolinguistics. The teacher will also need some elementary information about research in the field of Psycholinguistics to pinpoint his often vague ideas about L2 learning and/or acquisition[6].

To sum up, however, the main point that needs to be made about the Communicative Approach is that it starts from the premise that language learning is a matter for the pupil to achieve and that no amount of "teaching" languages i.e. teaching phonetics, morphology, syntax and semantics has ever successfully made a learner communicatively competent.

II A Mixed-Ability Class

Our discussion has now come to the point where we need to pay some attention to the problem of mixed-ability teaching. In all West-European countries of late years there is a strong educational movement that could bluntly be characterised as a shift in attention from the subject to the learner. Traditionally subjects derived from academic disciplines were used in education to select those pupils who intellectually responded most successfully to the teaching of these subjects. Examinations at the age of 11 or 12 were decisive of whether one was thought fit to enter the walhalla of an academic education or not. No account was taken of the fact that children do not all develop intellectually at the same rate and intellectual intelligence was exclusively valued to the detriment of f.i. manual intelligence. The resulting inequality of opportunities for different learners was great.

The above-mentioned educational movement , mainly carried by socialist

politics, increasingly led to the foundation of a school-type in which the teaching became more learner-centred. In this type of school, the learner is given more time to discover what type of further education suits him, he is given training in developing study-skills and social skills and the curriculum does not concentrate solely on the development of intellectual prowess. It offers, in short, a comprehensive education and the English name for it:"comprehensive school" is, therefore, very apt.(7)

The organisation of this school, as a matter of course, is fundamentally different from the traditional school. The insistence on avoiding stereotyping pupils at too early an age and on developing their social skills led to the formation of mixed-ability classes. In them we find to a much larger extent than is the case in a traditional selective school system, pupils with a wide range of differences. They differ as to intelligence, learning styles, social background (and therefore interests and frames of reference), aptitude, attitude, motivation and learningspeed. It is clear that teaching in classes of this kind, composed of pupils across the ability range on any of the above points, is not going to be a sinecure. Several solutions have been and are being tried like "streaming" (which basically goes against the "comprehensive" grain) and "setting" the pupils according to ability. The fact remains, however, that more than was the case in the past, the (FL)teacher is or will be confronted with classes that contain a wide variety of mixed-ability pupils. He needs an approach to language teaching, a methodology and a capacity for organising classroom activities(8) that will help him to function responsibly and adequately. The first two requirements will be discussed below under III and IV respectively.

III The Communicative Approach and Foreign Language Teaching in a Mixed-Ability Class

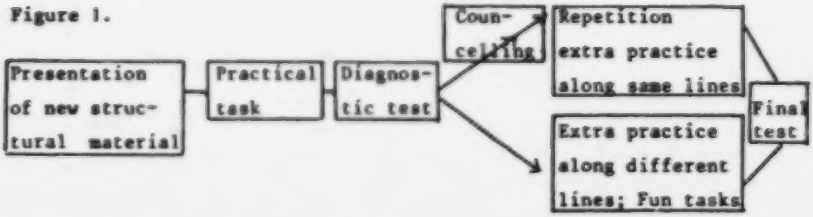
The main purpose of this section is to argue the point made in the Introduction that the best approach to FL teaching in mixed-ability classes is the Communicative Approach.

Traditional structural or grammatical approaches to language teaching

concentrate mainly on the form aspect and on correctness of language use. Leaving aside at this point any discussion about the merits of this approach for the development in the pupil of communicative competence, we can safely state that it only has an appeal, if any, for our more intelligent and able learners. It is an approach that requires learners to abstract from usually unauthentic or unauthentically used language data the structuring and patterning of the target language. On this point there is basically no difference between the grammar-translation approach and the more recent audio-lingual and audio-visual approaches. The grammatical structure is central, language learning is thought to be a linear process and teaching about the language gets a lot more emphasis than offering learners an attractive chance to learn to make appropriate use of the language itself. The concomitant methodology i.e. the presentation of new structural material often on the basis of text input specially prepared to highlight new structures followed by drilling and further practice does, if so, appeal likewise only to the more intellectually gifted pupil who likes to "get it right". The less able pupils soon lose interest and learn nothing at all.

It is obvious how this approach to language teaching does not take the less able pupil into account. That is why the first, structure based, models designed to help the teacher cope with mixed-ability classes fail miserably. The "language-is-grammar-and-you'd-better-get-your-sentences-correct" philosophy underlying the structural approach leads to models that basically look like this:

Figure 1.



There is central presentation of new material, some practice by the pupil with that material and then a diagnostic test after which those

who fail are set extra practice tasks of the same nature and those who pass are given further practice with the language by doing games, crossword puzzles and the like.

If we remind ourselves of the differences between pupils in a mixed-ability class we realise how the above model, with its insistence on language as form favours the intelligent and very able pupil. It does not accomodate different learning styles; it does not cater for different social backgrounds and interests; it does not take different aptitudes and attitudes into account and it takes only one type of motivation seriously. What it does do is allow for different learning speeds, but it uses to this purpose a methodology that is highly demotivating for the slow learner. Experience tells us that this slow learner will more than once find himself drilling away in the repeaters group and will thus never get a chance to use the learned material in practice. By the time he would be able to do so, the class has moved on to new structural input.

What this model does not do either, but this is by the way, is offer scope to the development in the learner of the social skills and study skills that the comprehensive school values so highly. It deals with students individually. Each individual student is busy with his own, largely cognitive, progress through grammar and lexicon, that seem so much more important than the use he may want to put them to in communication. For a broad development of study skills, like using a dictionary, note-making, note-taking and deciding on essentials and details of texts there is also precious little time and opportunity in this model's rather rigorous methodology.

By concentrating mainly on the structure of the FL and on the correctness of usage this model thus misses out on the two above mentioned scores. It does not make use of the possibilities that teaching a language as communication offers the teacher. If he truly realised that language is for communication, he would allow each learner to develop his command of the language in his own way in communication with others, at his own level and at his own speed. He would, thus, also be giving a chance for the pupil to socialise and develop social skills.

If the methodology is truly communicative pupils will learn to really listen to each other[9], cooperate together and learn from one another. Although, therefore, the teacher's attitude to language learning and teaching is of crucial importance he will find it hard, however much devoted to teaching communicatively, to put communicative principles into practice when teaching from a traditional structural syllabus. He will have to invest enormous amounts of time in planning and developing material and his creativity will be severely taxed in inventing a sufficient variety of learning tasks at different levels of difficulty. What he needs is an adequate syllabus/and coherent methodology to bring his communicative model for mixed-ability teaching to life.
Before discussing a communicative syllabus and methodology we should first draw our discussion to a close by attempting to visualise a communicative model for mixed-ability FL teaching. Figure 2 on page 113 is offered as such an attempt to represent a model on communicative principles. In this kind of model the learner is much more central than in the structural model as can be judged from the variety of exercises offered him. Besides he can work in groups as well as individually. If he works fast he can work his way through more of the exercise material than his slower class mate. As the exercises also differ in degree of difficulty they accomodate more able and less able pupils alike. In the groupwork social skills will be practised and in certain exercises study skills can be developed. There is constant diagnostic checking of comprehension and mastery and enough varied exercise material for remedial work for the slow learner. The exercises all aim at involving the learner's world of personal experience and invite him, as it were, to identify with the language thus taking his social background & personal interests into account.
Now that the advantages of the communicative model over the structural one have been dealt with something needs to be said about the guiding principles that underlie this communicative model.

IV Syllabus Design and Methodology of the Communicative Model

If the syllabus designer has no longer the (pseudo-logical) organisa-

Figure 2

INPUT I	TASKS	INPUT II	COMMUNICATIVE TASKS	INPUT III	COMMUNICATIVE TASKS	TERMINATION
Presentation of authentic material. Multi media. More than just one Input item	Much varied practice, oral & written, individual/groupwork. Permanent diagnostic check on mastery & comprehension. Mainly receptive work. Attention for functions & semantico-grammatical phenomena.	See input I	Much varied practice, oral & written, individual & groupwork. Permanent diagnostic check on mastery & comprehension. Receptive & controlled reproductive work, moving from simulation to world of personal experience. Cognitive & affective speech intentions.	See input I and II	Much varied practice, oral & written, individual & groupwork. Permanent diagnostic check on mastery & comprehension. Receptive & less controlled productive work involving world of personal experience. Integrated study-skills work.	Production of oral & written language in reaction to input of some kind: spontaneous reactions without giving reasons & complex reactions stating reasons. No error correction.

Based on Candlin C.N. (1981): The Communicative Teaching of English (Longman).

tion of the grammar of the language to guide him, he will need some other principle. Our choice, following van Ek (1976), Wilkins (1976), Candlin (1981) and Johnson (1982) are functions of language [10] and semantico-grammatical categories as the first organisation principles. The third principle is one of organisation of the input material. We choose for a thematic organisation for reasons of motivation and to ensure that certain language functions and lexicon will recur for the learner while he works his way through the theme. Thus textual input is first of all chosen to fit the theme. In the exercise material language functions and grammar for meaning (often in a rule-of-thumb manner) will appear regularly. The events featuring in the thematic input material spark off ideas for the content of the exercises.
It goes without saying that in selecting themes in this communicative model it is the learner and his world of personal experience that is a decisive factor. For the young learner (12-16 age range) we would take, for example, again following van Ek (1976), topic areas like:

1. personal identification;
2. house & home;
3. Life at home;
4. Education & further career;
5. Free time; entertainment;
6. Travel;
7. Relations with other people (love & friendship);
8. Health & welfare;
9. Shopping;
10. Food & drink;
11. Service;
12. Places;
13. Foreign language;
14. Weather.

In these very broad themes that could be given a variety of specific realisations through the form and nature of the input material [11] there are, naturally, inbuilt a number of very important language-functions like: - importing & seeking factual information;

- expressing & finding out intellectual attitudes;
- expressing & finding out emotional attitudes;
- expressing and finding out moral attitudes;
- getting things done (suasion);
- socialising.

These functions will naturally occur in any suitable authentic or authentic sounding[12] input material that fits the theme. The varied practice material will give the learner sufficient practice in mastering those linguistic realisations of the functions that suit him best. The most common grammatical structures will also occur in thematic units concentrating on any of the topic areas mentioned above. They should be be dealt with for meaning. Their notional meaning (Candlin, 1981, p. 32) should be concentrated on and therefore exercises on various grammatical realisations of the same notional meaning could be taken up in the exercise material.

Something remains to be said about the methodology followed in this communicative model and some examples of exercises will be given for illustration.

Perusal of the above communicative model shows that there is a clear progression throughout the thematic unit from comprehension of input material to the free use of language for real communication. In the early stages the emphasis is clearly on comprehension and the exercises offered and the methodology used will be directed to opening up the language to the learner[13]. The first two columns aim at this opening up. This is stage I called the Comprehension stage. Stage II contains exercises that invite the learner to use language reproductively, orally and written, in a controlled situation. This is the Implanting Skills stage. Stage III offers the learner a chance to develop his skills further through exercises challenging him to try to use the language more productively in less controlled situations. After this third stage called Developing Skills, there is the fourth stage in which the learner has to use the skills he has acquired in the course of the unit spontaneously, taking his own ideas as starting points and motivating his position. Although there is a clear difference in nature between the exercise ty-

pes in the different stages several comprehension type exercises of the first stage occur in stage II or even stage III and typical stage II exercises also feature in stage III. Graphically this could be represented as follows:

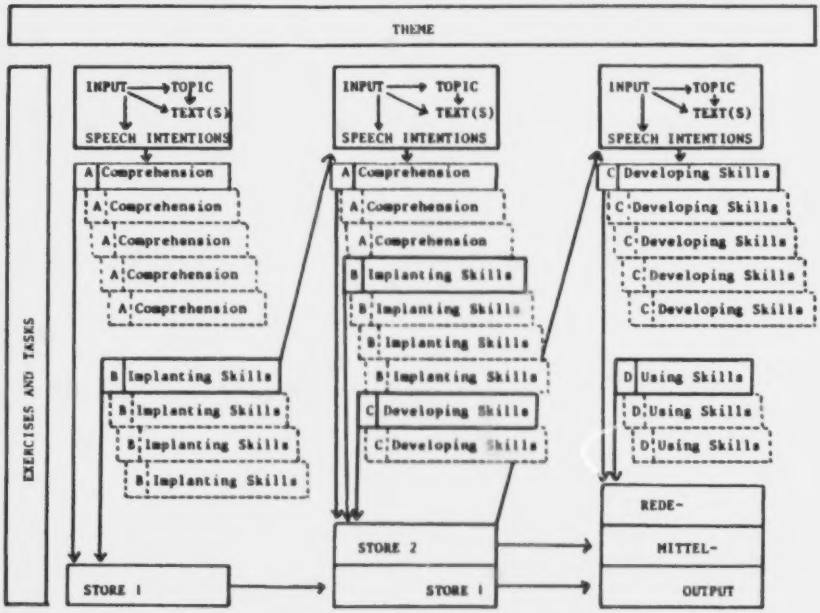


Figure 3 . Schematized Presentation of Unit Procedure Chart.
Taken from Middenschool in Beeld; SLO/pg OLM 1981; OLM31-D 109

Getting acquainted with the various exercise types that are used can perhaps best be done by giving an overview of them. In this overview they will be strictly organised as to the phase they are most prominent in. As we have seen in the above figure, however , they may occur in other phases as well.

Figure 4 . OVERVIEW OF EXERCISE TYPES

OFFER ADDITIONAL HELP TO MAKE TEXTS MORE ACCESSIBLE OFFER OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARNER TO ASCERTAIN HIMSELF WHETHER THE MOST IMPORTANT INFO FROM TEXT HAS COME ACROSS	- GET ORGANISED (CONCEPTS) - GET ORGANISED (NARRATION) - RIGHT-WRONG EXERCISES - CONNECTING EXERCISES - MATCHING EXERCISES - MULTIPLE CHOICE - RIGHT-WRONG EX. ORALLY - RECOGNITION EXERCISES (CARD GAMES) - WORD SCRAMBLE - .....
PRACTISING REPRODUCTIVELY WITH SPEECH MATERIAL (IMPLANTING SKILLS) TO REALISE: COGNITIVE SPEECH INTENTIONS (place, time, number, sort, manner, "grammatical structures" used), AFFECTIVE SPEECH INTENTIONS (personal, emotional reactions to facts, "set phrases").	- SWITCHBOARD - MEMORISATION OF LINGUISTIC REALISATION OF COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE SPEECHINTENTIONS - PICTURE STIMULUS - RESTORATION (insertion-catch-words + connectives-picture guidance - gap text-flow chart-defective dialogue) - GUIDED INTERACTION
MORE PRODUCTIVE USE OF SPEECH MATERIAL - less strongly guided - transfer to situations that are more accessible to learner PRACTICE OF "STUDY SKILLS" IN PREPARATION OF AND TRAINING FOR FREE UTTERANCE IN DISCUSSION	- OPEN DIALOGUE - REFERENTIAL COMPOSITION - SUBSTITUTION TABLE - OPEN ENDED COMPOSITION - SURVEY SHEET (summing up info/ questionnaire results), - RECOGNITION (situation/factual evidence/speech intentions register - UNDERLINING/HIGHLIGHTING - NOTE TAKING/NOTE MAKING
THE FREE USE OF THE COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS IN REACTION TO A TEXT OR IN A DISCUSSION - spontaneous reaction without stating reasons - reacting-giving first simple, later more complex reasons - reacting quickly in a discussion	- LANGUAGE CHARTS - DISCOURSE CHARTS

As can be seen some of the exercises (multiple-choice, right/wrong) are not new. What is claimed to be new is their grouping and function in the communicative model.
As the term: "Get organized" for an exercise is perhaps new, here is an example of such an exercise:

Figure 5 : Get Organized (concept)
The Get Organized exercise type can be used to introduce and practise selected lexical items. For instance, the aim here is to introduce to the learner certain 'technical terms' from the world of shoplifting. Understanding the terms comes from matching the terms, on the left, to their 'definitions' on the right. A simple way of doing that is to pencil in a line joining the two appropriate parts.

a shoplifter	spots shoplifters
a "regular"	pinches things from shops
a regular shoplifter	has often shoplifted
the store detective	steals from the same shop often
shoplifting (shop theft)	tries to catch shoplifters
an "old hand"	is stealing things from shops

(From: Speak for Yourself, Law-breakers, 1.1 (altered and abridged))
Taken from C. Candlin (1981).

The learner has to connect the boxes in the right way. This exercise can be used for checking the comprehension of vocabulary and the narrative. For checking on the comprehension of "sound" vocabulary here is an original exercise of the "recognition" type:

Figure 6.

RECOGNITION EXERCISE (CARD GAME)

Instructions: Listen to the tape. Get into groups. Put the cards into the order of the sounds you hear. Afterwards make sure you all agree.

HOLLOW LAUGHTER	SCRATCHING
CREAKING	TA-PP-ING
FOOT STEPS	HOWL
SCREAM	FIRE
WHINING	GUILLOTINE
MISSING	DRIPPING

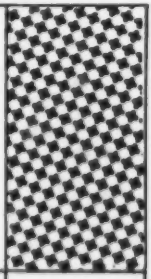
The learner is expected to cut out the boxes and arrange the "sound" words in the order in which he hears them on the tape.
Here is an example of a so-called "switchboard" exercise providing the pupil with practice in the language material that he needs to realise cognitive and affective speech-intentions.

Figure 7 .

S W I T C H B O A R D II

DON'T WORRY !

There is a crowd on Gibbet Hill watching the mystery object.
Imagine you are among all the frightened people.

Express your fear:		Calm your partner:	
I'm afraid	it will blow up any minute.	Calm down.	
	if it blows up it will destroy everything.		
I'm frightened	the thing will kill us all.	It's all right.	
	the people in the flying saucer will attack us.	Don't be afraid,	that won't happen.
I'm sure	the police will lose control of the object.	Don't worry,	that's out of the question.
	the whole situation will get out of control.	Don't be frightened,	there's no danger of that.
I've got a feeling	the mystery object will attack London.		

As can be seen the use of language for communication starts here, be it controlled. The learner can feel that what he is practising has a direct relevance to what he is expecting and expected to be able to do with the language.

An example of how the notion of "duration of time" i.e. grammar for meaning can be practised is a "Defective Dialogue" type of exercise:

Figure 8a . Info-Sheet

I have been fishing for hours and hours
Let's go back. We have been sailing since 9 o'clock
I don't know what's the matter with her. She has been reading since 10 o'clock
What about a swim? We have been sitting here for 4 hours now
They have been playing water polo since 2 o'clock. What a bore!
Hurry up! I have been waiting for 15 minutes now
Come on, let's go swimming. You have been lying here for 3 hours now

Figure 8b

RESTORATION

CAROLINE REDCLIFE	ROLAND SCHMIDT
14 years old Canterbury South of England near Dover + pop music Magna Carta Slade + Melanie	14 years old Frankfurt Germany + transistor radio + pop music Melanie - Slade
pupil - speak German + speak French	+ speak English learnt at school for 4 years will stay for 3 weeks

Caroline: Your English is very good.
Roland: Do you think so?
Caroline: .....? (learn)
Roland: For 4 years.

Jack: Do you like this town?
John: It bores me stiff
Jack:.....?(live)
John: For 3 months.

Peter: What's wrong with your bicycle?
Bob: It's got a flat tyre. I can't find the hole.
Peter:.....?(look)
Bob: For 2 hours.

Reporter: Your boys are very good footballers.
Coach: You bet they are.
Reporter:.....?(coach)
Coach: For 1 year.

Caroline: Oh, Roland, you here already?
Roland: Of course, it's a quarter past.
Caroline:.....(wait)
Roland: Since 4 o'clock.

Henry: The guitarist in our group let us down. So we're looking for a new one.
Mac: Why don't you take me on?
Henry:.....?(play)
Mac: Since 1968.

Mike: Would you dance with me?
Karin: No, thanks, I'm too tired. My feet are hurting.
Mike:.....?(dance)
Karin: Since they opened here.

Malcolm: What an enormous stamp collection you've got.
Kevin: Well, it took me quite a time to get it together.
Malcolm:.....?(collect)
Kevin: Since I was a schoolboy.

(From: Caroline, I Love You, 3.3 and 3.4)

A freer use of the language is stimulated in so-called "Referential Compostion" exercises. The learners are first given a visual with a dialogue that fits the theme (in this case: Caroline I Love You (see note 11). A slight alteration in the situation is suggested and the learner is invited to react personally, as he would under the circumstances, filling the empty balloons.

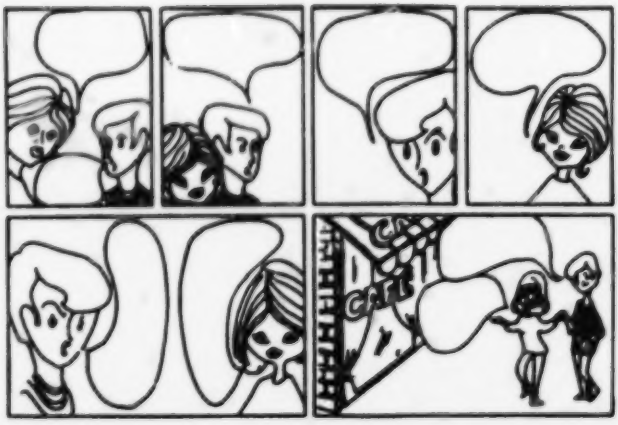
Figure 9a INFO-SHEET

This is a picture-story. In the story a boy and a girl meet each other after school. They talk to each other. But the things they say are not the same as the things they think.
What they say is in these balloons:

Their thoughts are in these balloons:

1
There she is.... I was hoping I'd see her
Thank God school is over
2
I like her very much. She's always so cheerful She's got a nice smile
It was a real drag day today, wasn't it?
3
I wouldn't half like to see her more often
And my class really gets on my nerves
4
I hope I don't get on his nerves I think he's super
So does mine .....
5
Should I ask her to come to Toni's for a Coke?
Er, um... How about .....?
I'd like to spend some more time with him
Yes,.. ?
6
DAVE....
Oh, cheerio then, see you
Here comes my bus
WHAT A SHAME!

Figure 9b. You are not like Sue and Bob, say what you think.



This can be extended into an even more complex exercise like the following where the pupil (by himself or in pairs) is expected to write a comic strip with the characters and the situation visually provided.

Figure 9c .

OPENENDED COMPOSITION

In this phase there is excellent opportunity to vary the exercises communicatively to accomodate the fast and more able learners. They may be set assignments aimed at recognizing register. They have to decide, for instance, whether someone speaking on the tape is addressing an equal, a superior or an inferior, or someone he likes or dislikes.

For a study skills exercise like "Note Taking" grids like the following are used. The learners have to fill them in while listening to a tape.

Figure 10. NOTE TAKING

What do they report about the landing of the aliens?

	GEORGE MITCHELL (PUB SCENE)	RADIO NEWSFLASH	DAILY MIRROR	RADIO: THE NEWS
SIZE COLOUR ORIGIN FURTHER INFORMATION				
WHERE?				
WHEN?				
WITH WHAT RESULTS?				
WHAT IS BEING DONE?				

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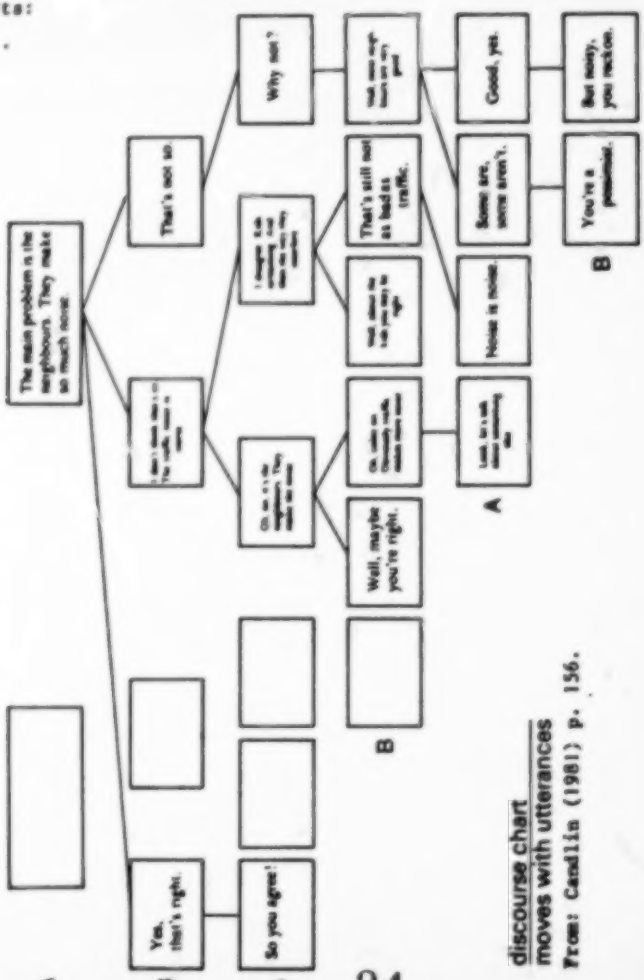
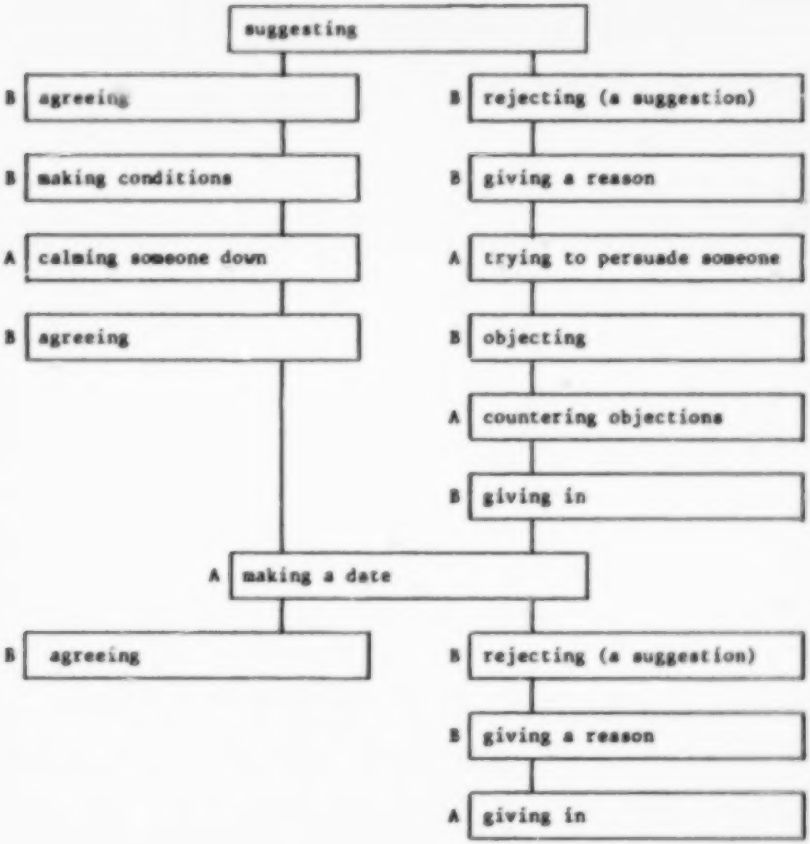
In the last phase, finally, the learner is invited to speak spontaneously about a topic that forms part of or has a clear link with the theme. He does so in a discussion with his class mates, reacting to a stimulus. The objective is that he reacts spontaneously, first without, later with stating the reasons for his reaction. Language- or discourse charts could be used as stimuli and guidance. Here are two such discourse charts:

Figure 11.



discourse chart
moves with utterances
From: Candlin (1981) p. 156.

Figure 12. Now work with a partner!
Using the note-taking sheet, make up
a dialogue on the same topic.



(From: Terry Moston: Bank Holiday Weekend (unpubl. MS.)

Of course it is not possible to give a representative picture of how thematic units are constructed or how the exercises work within the context of the theme by just giving a few examples. Readers that are interested in a more extensive overview of how this communicative model is intended to work are referred to C.N. Candlin ed. The Communicative Teaching of English, Longman 1981.

It is the present writer's hope, however, that this contribution has provided the reader (teacher and teacher trainer alike) with a case for considering a communicative model an extremely viable proposition in language teaching. It has the advantage over the structural approach of considering language learning as a highly personal and therefore complex activity on the part of the learner. At the same time, because of this, it is an eminently usable model for FL teaching in mixed-ability classes.

Notes

1) This quote was taken from Dolle, et al: "Communicative FL Teaching and how it Reflects on the Training of Modern F.L. Teachers" in EJTE vol 6, no. 2, 1983.

2) There is important support for this attitude to errors from psychology. The Dutch educational psychologist C. van Parreren has developed a theory of (language) learning which on the basis of experiments claims that all our (learning) experiences leave traces in our brain. These traces may (and often do) link up to form systems. Learning a new language actually constitutes the development of a new system of traces. The point at issue here is that during the learning process affective factors play an important role. They also will be taken up as traces in the system. Thus a teacher who concentrates mainly on error-improvement will produce learners that are extremely diffident and uncertain. Speaking a foreign language for them is an extremely hazardous business, often something they do not like to do. It is tied up in their associative system with bad marks on reports and consequent frustration.

3) See Breen and Candlin, 1980.

4) A more fundamental discussion of the implications of the communicative philosophy for FL teacher training can be found in Dolle & Willems' contribution to this collection (see pp. 87-102).

5) For a discussion of the importance of Pragmatics for FL teaching see Philip Riley's contribution to this reader (pp. 37-83).

6) For the contrast between language learning and acquisition see: Stephen D. Krashen: Second Language Acquisition & Second Language Learning.

7) In different West-European countries we find different names for this type of school. Germany has its "Gesamtschule"; Denmark its "Folkeschole"; Sweden its "Grundskola" and Holland its "Middenschool" (or more recently "Voortgezet Basisonderwijs" (VBaO).

8) For an illustration of what is meant here see Hubbard et al. (1983) pp. 310-312.

9) For an instance of the difference between a structural drill and a communicative one see Keith Johnson (1982) pp. 156-162.

10) See for a broad categorisation of functions of language: Candlin (1981) p. 80. Candlin gives:
   1) Language as a means of expressing knowledge, facts, ideas and concepts.
   2) Language as a means of expressing social conventions and behaviour.
   3) Language as a means of social control.
   4) Language as a means of expressing opinions and needs, of persuading others and of negotiating (mis)interpretations.

11) Various thematic units have been developed over the past few years in Germany, Holland and Denmark. The main impetus is coming from comprehensive school circles.
   Some of the themes are: German boy meets English girl on a Danish camp-site - they get acquainted, talk about their hobbies, their preferences in music and fall in love (title: Caroline I Love You); an invasion from outer space in the centre of London and all the panic and confusion that causes (Ugly Brutes); running away from home because of problems with parents (Runaways); Gordon Banks, the famous English goalkeeper getting involved in an accident with a lot of medical legal and social consequences in which the media are strongly involved (An Accident). These have all been developed in West Germany under the title ISSUES, Baukästen für den Englischunterricht and are published by Langenscheidt-Longman, München 1978.

12) "Authentic or authentic sounding" is to be taken as meaning "for communication" or as "(likely to) occur(ring) in natural human communication". An input text like the following:
   "It is Monday morning. Billy is running down the High street. He is running to school. Now he must cross the road. The lights are red, but Billy starts running across the road." (Candlin, 1981, p. 14)

seems contrived to present the learner with new grammar and lexis more than to represent real life language use. By using this type of language input the syllabus designer confronts the learner with the difficulty to recognise what he reads as real language use, for there is no real communicative purpose behind it. Into the bargain, and this is even worse, he also surreptitiously indoctrinates the learner into believing that the F.L. is not for communication but for the school curriculum.

13) The exercise typology described was taken from Candlin (1981) pp. 64 and 65.

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